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June 20, 2006
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NEWS RELEASE

NO SUMMER VACATION FOR THESE HIGH SCHOOLERS: ONE SELECTED FOR STANFORD PROGRAM, OTHERS TO TRAVEL TO NASA

DAYTON, Ohio — As a seventh grader, Lucas Pace was flunking classes and dangerously close to falling into substance abuse. Three years later, the Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) student is preparing to board an airplane for the first time to live on campus and take college classes through Stanford University's selective High School Summer College.

Through the support of his adoptive parents and the help of teachers at DECA, he's turned his life around, becoming a veteran at taking college courses as he completes his high school diploma. By the end of the summer, he will have earned 53 college credits and is on track to hold an associate's degree when he graduates from the Dayton Public Schools in 2008. An anonymous donor has stepped forward with money for Pace's tuition that will allow him to take "Elementary Economics" and "Psychology of Peak Performance" during the intensive, eight-week program at Stanford University that starts June 24.

"When my parents came into the restaurant where I work to tell me I was accepted into Stanford's program, I started screaming and jumping up and down," said Pace, 17. "My one aim is to graduate from high school with an associate's degree. I'd be the first in my family to have a college degree."

That's the goal of DECA, a partnership between the University of Dayton and Dayton Public Schools. Early college high schools target first-generation college students, who can earn up to two years of college credit during high school while working with a challenging curriculum tailored to their interests.

"There's a crisis in urban education," said Judy Hennessey, DECA principal. "Our singular focus is to prepare urban learners to access a college education and stay on a college campus with success. We are incredibly convinced and passionate that our work will make a difference. We have tremendous promise. We will not sell these young people short with a

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low bar and a low set of expectations."

Only in its third year of operation, DECA students have already earned more than 1,000 college credits through the University of Dayton and Sinclair Community College. Its students' Ohio Graduation Test scores are much higher than state averages. Approximately 95 percent of DECA students taking the test passed all five parts — compared to the statewide passage rate of approximately 66.5 percent, according to preliminary data from the Ohio Department of Education.

DECA's early success continues to draw national attention: Harvard University's Graduate School of Education selected DECA as one of only two early college high schools to be part of a long-term study it's conducting of such schools. A 2005 study by WestEd, a nonprofit education research organization, featured five high school models, including DECA, that represent a growing national network of academically rigorous high schools that prepare students for college and work. DECA will be included in the report again when it's re-released during the 2006-2007 academic year.

Pace is not the only DECA student who's using summer vacation to continue to learn. An experiment by DECA students, the Boonshoft Museum of Natural History and UD's School of Engineering has been selected for a space shuttle mission. Four students plan to travel to Houston in August to participate in a flight simulation that will test their "Emergency Severe Wound Containment/Treatment Device Evaluation" experiment.

Lance Ryan Brown, 17, is traveling to South Africa for a youth leadership program. Alexis Ponder, 17, has received a scholarship to take "Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science" through Xavier University's two-week Jump Start College Experience Program. Another 20 students are enrolled in enrichment programs at Wright State University, and two will participate in UD's weeklong Women in Engineering summer camp.

"I have seen DECA students blossom into young adults who are considering post-secondary education," said Danya Berry, college liaison for DECA. "That was a mystical thing to them at the beginning. It's no longer mystical."

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For media interviews, contact **Judy Hennessey**, **Danya Berry** and **Stacie Williams**, DECA curriculum specialist, at (937) 542-5630; **Lucas Pace** at (937) 671-5575; **Alexis Ponder** at (937) 648-2084; and **Ryan Brown** at (937) 277-9827.